

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the following claims as indicated.

1. (Currently Amended) A video slot gaming machine for playing by a player, comprising:

a housing having a display device for displaying a plurality of game elements in a grid having a plurality of cells, wherein the cells represent a plurality of horizontal reels;

a memory device for storing a pay-table; [[and,]]

a game controller coupled to the display device and the memory device for randomly selecting the game elements to be displayed in the display device and for determining an outcome based on the displayed game elements, a pay-table, predetermined vertical pay-lines, and a wager made by the player; and

said game elements comprising a first, second, and third portions corresponding to a first character for aggregating said portions into said first character when said game elements are vertically aligned in said vertical pay-line.

2. (Original) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the game controller is adapted to animate the display device to represent the spinning of horizontal reels.

3. (Original) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the game controller is adapted to randomly select a game element for each cell.

4. (Original) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 1, wherein the memory device is adapted to store a plurality of arrays of game elements, each array corresponding to a horizontal reel.

5. (Original) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 4, wherein the game controller is adapted to select a stopping position for each array on the corresponding horizontal reel.

6. (Currently Amended) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 1, wherein said first, second, and third portions are further defined as ~~the set of possible game elements includes gems and symbols representing the~~ a plurality of different heads, legs, and torso and arms, and head of to aggregately form a plurality of characters different from one another for activating a bonus game.

7. (Currently Amended) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 6, wherein said plurality of the first, second, and third characters have different shapes.

8. (Currently Amended) A video slot machine, as set forth in claim 6, wherein said plurality of the first, second, and third characters have different colors.

Claims 9 - 20. Cancelled.

21. (Currently Amended) A method for playing a video slot game by a player, comprising:

displaying a plurality of game elements comprising a head, a torso with arms, and legs corresponding to a first character in a grid having a plurality of cells, wherein the cells represent horizontal reels;

storing a pay-table;

randomly selecting the game elements to be displayed in the display device;

determining an outcome based on the displayed game elements, a pay-table, predetermined vertical pay-lines, and a wager made by the player; and

aggregating the head, torso with arms, and legs into the first character when the game elements are vertically aligned in the vertical pay-line.

22. (Original) A method, as set forth in claim 21, including the step of animating the display device to represent the sliding of horizontal reels.

23. (Original) A method, as set forth in claim 21, including the step of randomly selecting a game element for each cell.

24. (Original) A method, as set forth in claim 21, including the step of storing a plurality of arrays of game elements, each array corresponding to a horizontal reel.

25. (Original) A method, as set forth in claim 24, including the step of selecting a stopping position for each array on the corresponding horizontal reel.

Claims 26 - 37. Cancelled.

38. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for playing a video game, the computer program product comprising a computer usable storage medium having computer readable program code means embodied in the medium, the computer readable program code means comprising:

computer readable program code means for displaying a plurality of game elements comprising a head, a torso with arms, and legs corresponding to a first character in a grid having a plurality of cells, wherein the cells represent horizontal reels;

computer readable program code means for storing a pay-table;

computer readable program code means for randomly selecting the game elements to be displayed in the display device; [[and,]]

computer readable program code means for determining an outcome based on the displayed game elements, a pay-table, predetermined vertical pay-lines, and a wager made by the player; and

computer readable program code means for aggregating the head, torso with arms, and legs into the first character when the game elements are vertically aligned in the vertical pay-line.

Claims 39 - 40. Cancelled.